

## Youth Conservation Corps at Kenai Refuge completes another of successful summer of work

by Craig Moore



*Installing boardwalk at Moose Range Meadows. USFWS*

The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge's 2006 Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) was once again a blazing success story. There were five 15-18 year old girls and boys that did a mind-boggling amount of work during their eight-week program.

Most work involved helping maintaining the trails that people hike and ski on at the Refuge. They accomplished these tasks using only hand tools: loppers, hand saws, weed whips, pulaskis, rakes, shovels, and wheelbarrows.

Refuge staff evaluated proposals for YCC projects prior to the program's June 12<sup>th</sup> starting date. Where departments in the Refuge were short on manpower; the YCC crew eagerly volunteered to help get these jobs done.

One such task was helping put together the boardwalk for public fishing at Moose Range Meadows. Other projects combined the YCC's Environmental Ed-

ucation topic "Leave No Trace," rehabilitation of the Funny River Road gravel pit at mile 8, and litter patrol at the Russian River Ferry. Bags and bags of trash and fishing line were recovered from the latter two projects.

Whenever you get a chance to hike the Keen Eye Trail, Centennial Trail, Hidden Creek Trail, you will see evidence of the YCC's labors to improve the trail system. You will also encounter the YCC's handiwork if you cross-country ski the Cheechako Loop, Howling Hill Loop, or Nordic View Loop near the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters, or ride your horse on the Hansen Horse Trail.

YCC workers also learned how to mix cement while setting a new fire ring at the Outdoor Education Center; they also replaced the old rock retaining walls with new timbers along the path leading to the fire ring.

If you go camping at Dolly Varden or Hidden Lake Campgrounds, you will see where the YCC crew removed brush along the roads and around the campsites. Perhaps the most obvious accomplishment was at the Moose Range Meadows parking areas, where the crew converted the landscape islands in the parking lots from weed beds to something more eye-appealing.

YCC performed many essential tasks in 2006; hopefully there will be funding available in 2007 to perform many more.

*As leader of the YCC program, Craig Moore brings experiences in teaching science, photography, maintenance work for the National Park Service, and rock/adobe building. Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.*